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Sermon on the Epistle for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

GAL. 3, 15—22.

The Law and the Gospel, we heard last Sunday, are two widely distinct and differing doctrines. The one, we were told, killeth, while the other giveth life; the one is the ministration of condemnation, the other, the ministration of righteousness. The Law condemns the sinner. It tells him: Because you have transgressed my commandments and acted against the will of God, you have incurred His wrath and punishment, and you must die. The Gospel, on the other hand, comes to the sinner and tells him: Though you have deserved to die and to be damned eternally, yet you shall not be lost, for Christ has died for you. Therefore believe in Him, and you shall live. The Law, too, promises man eternal life, but only on condition that he comply perfectly with all its requirements. The Gospel promises him eternal life without any requirements and conditions of any kind. It only asks him to accept eternal life by faith in Christ.

Thus these two doctrines of the Law and the Gospel are directly opposite to each other. They are as different from each other as water and fire, as day and night. And yet God has given both these doctrines, and has given them both to sinful mankind. When God speaks in a voice of thunder from Mount Sinai the words of the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord, thy God: Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and so on, that is directed to the sinful human race just as well as when Christ calls out in a persuasive, gentle voice: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now how is this possible? How can both the Law and the Gospel be given to sinful mankind? Does not the one stand up against and contradict the other? Does not the one annul the other? To put it

this way: Does not the Law exclude the Gospel? To this question we find an answer in to-day's epistle-lesson. Let us, then, endeavor to learn to-day:

HOW THE LAW HARMONIZES WITH THE GOSPEL.

The text shows,

1. *That it does not disannul the Gospel,*
2. *That, moreover, it prepares the sinner for the Gospel.*

1.

The Law does not disannul or make void the Gospel—that is the first point St. Paul makes in our text. For thus he begins: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." Paul is going to speak of the covenant or testament that God has made, in which He has laid down His bequest to man. And in order to show beforehand that such covenant of God must stand and can never become void, he introduces the apt example of a man's testament. When such a testament has been made and confirmed, when the testator has set it down and the notary put his hand and seal to it, then nobody on earth has right or power to change that testament after the death of the testator. Now if this is the case with the testament of mortal man, how much less, St. Paul means to say, can the covenant or testament of the eternal God be disannulled!

Now what is that testament or covenant of God? Paul shows this in the following verse: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Although Paul does not quote the words of the promises to which he has reference, yet it is evident which promises he means. For he says that in them occurs the word "seed," and every Bible reader at once knows which promise is meant. Everyone is immediately reminded of the beautiful words of God to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The meaning of this promise Paul explains to be this: The word "seed" being not in the plural, but in the singular, it cannot refer to the Jewish people, as was commonly thought to be the case by this people, but it must refer to one single individual, and this individual, Paul says, is Christ. Hence the meaning of the promise is: In Christ, the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the earth are to be blessed, *i. e.*, He is to be the Savior of sinful mankind, who was to rescue them from the curse which they had incurred, and bring back to them the blessing of their heavenly Father which they had lost.

And this covenant, or testament, which God made with Abraham the Law did not and could not disannul. "And this I say," Paul

continues, "that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." If a man makes a testament at one time, and a different one at a later period of his life, he repeals the former and puts the latter in its place. Thus one might also think that God, by giving the Law 430 years after He had made that promise to Abraham, had again repealed that promise and put the Law in its place. But that is false reasoning. Man may change his mind, but not so God. His thoughts are the same at all times. He is unalterable, and so is His counsel, and so also His testament must be unalterable. The Law, therefore, cannot alter or annul the covenant made by God with Abraham. For that covenant, Paul says, was confirmed before of God in Christ, *i. e.*, in regard to Christ. It was this in which the covenant consisted, that God promised Christ. This Christ-covenant, then, God had confirmed; He had sealed it, for instance, by the sign of circumcision, for that was the import of that ceremony. How, then, should God, the Unchangeable, repeal this covenant of the promise by the giving of the Law later on? That would be impossible. That cannot be the purpose of the Law.

Hence it cannot at all have been the intention of God when giving the Law that man should be saved by it. For then it would indeed conflict with the promise of the Gospel and make it void. To give it in the words of Paul: "For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." If man was to receive the inheritance of eternal life by the Law, then he would no longer receive it by the free promise of the Gospel. For the Law demands works of man, before it will give him eternal life. Its promises of heaven are given only on condition of a perfect fulfillment of all its requirements by man. But the Gospel promises heaven freely, for Christ's sake, without works on man's part. So, then, if we are to get to heaven by the Gospel, we cannot get there by the Law, and if contrariwise by the Law, then we cannot get there by the Gospel. These two exclude each other. "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work," as Paul puts it in the 11th chapter of Romans. "But now," Paul concludes, "God gave it (the inheritance) to Abraham by promise." Abraham did not do anything towards meriting that blessing, which God accorded to him in that covenant, but it was a free gift of God's grace. The covenant which God made with Abraham was a gracious covenant that excluded all works of the Law. Hence, if the Law was given for the purpose of saving man, then, indeed, did it annul the promise given to Abraham and the covenant, or testament, which God made with him. From this, then, we must deduce: If the Law did not disannul the covenant

which God made with Abraham, in other words, if it did not repeal the Gospel (for that covenant was a Gospel-covenant), then its purpose cannot be to save man, but it must have another purpose. Hence the question arises here: What is the purpose of the Law? For what reason did God give it? What were His intentions in doing so? What benefit does man derive from it? And this question and its answer Paul gives in the following verse. Let us learn in the second place, therefore, what is the purpose of the Law.

2.

The purpose of the Law, to state it briefly, is to prepare the sinner for the Gospel, to bring him to Christ. Paul puts it this way: "Wherefore, then, serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made." The Law was "added," *viz.*, added to the Gospel-covenant made with Abraham, "because of transgressions." Paul here principally refers to the ceremonial laws of the Jews. They were added "because of transgressions," *i. e.*, the sacrifices and washings and fastings and cleansings enjoined in them should remind the Jews of the fact that they were guilty of transgressions, of which they must be cleansed. They were to keep them in a continual, uninterrupted tremble on account of their sins and make them watch and fight steadily against evil. And what is more, they were to remind them of the promised Savior from their sins, to show them the necessity of the Messiah who was to redeem them from their transgressions. For every thinking Jew saw at once that these sacrifices of animals and these ablutions and other ceremonies were not able to cleanse them from their sins, but that they were only a picture, a type, of the great sacrifice by which the coming Messiah should really and truly take away their sins, by faith in whom alone, therefore, they could be saved. And because that was the object of these ceremonial laws, to show the Jews their transgressions and to point them forward to the Messiah, they were to be observed only "till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made," as Paul says in the text, *i. e.*, until the time of Christ. By Him all these ceremonial laws of Moses were to be abolished. They were only a shadow, or type, of Him and His atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Therefore, when He came, who was the body itself, the shadow disappeared; when the antitype made its appearance, the type must vanish. "Christ is the end of the Law," has reference, in the first place, to the ceremonial law.

But Paul has reference not only to the ceremonial law, but also to the moral law, the holy Ten Commandments. These were also added because of transgressions. They, without types and shadows, tell us of our sins and transgressions and the damnation of which we are guilty. They tell us of all this in plain, unmistakable words.

And this moral law was not only given to the Jews, but it concerns us just as well. For it was not abolished by Christ. It is of this law that Christ says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." It is true, Christ is also "the end of the moral law for righteousness to every one that believeth." We must not fulfill the Law to be saved. But, nevertheless, it is our duty to live in conformity with the Law, for in it is expressed the eternal will of God which it is our duty to fulfill. And thus this moral law still shows us our transgressions and sins, and terrifies us on account of them. The Law in this way also shows us in the New Testament, shows every impenitent, unbelieving sinner, that he is condemned already and is utterly helpless, and thus points him towards Christ, the Savior from his sins. In this manner the Law, just as it did in the Old Testament, brings the sinner to Christ, prepares him for the Gospel.

To this Paul adds the following: "And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." These words are very difficult to understand, and they have, in fact, baffled the ingenuity of all the great expositors of Scripture, so that almost every one offers a different explanation. I would therefore hardly venture to offer an exegesis of the same. However, the following, which I found in one commentary, seems to me to be at least indicated by the words of the apostle: That the Law was given because of transgressions, as Paul has just said, is also evident from the manner in which it was given. For it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator, *i. e.*, when God gave His Law on Mount Sinai, He was accompanied by all the holy angels, who blew the trumpets and ministered unto Him; and it was given in the hand of a mediator, *viz.*, Moses, who received it from God and brought it to Israel. Now this majestic, terrifying manner in which God appeared here, as well as the fact that the people did not dare approach the mountain, but that Moses must carry the Law to them, undoubtedly was to show that the Law was given to reveal sin and threaten its punishment, that the people, being sinful, were not worthy to appear before God and to approach Him, and that the Law was not able to bring the two together. Hence, in short, it was a proof of the fact that the Law "was added because of transgressions." This, it seems to me, is indicated by the words.

Here, perhaps, somebody might ask the question: Is the Law not against the Gospel, do they not contradict each other, since one is a free promise of heaven, while the other teaches the necessity of works for salvation? Paul, in conclusion, takes up this point, asking, "Is the Law, then, against the promises of God?" and answering: "God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the Law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith

of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." In order to show that there is no discrepancy between the Law and the Gospel, Paul says if a law had been given which could have conferred life, then righteousness would indeed have come by the Law, that is to say, if the Law would have given us life or the power to fulfill its commandments perfectly, then indeed we could have been saved by it, then it would have declared us righteous in the sight of God and awarded heaven to us. But that is where the trouble lies. The Law does not give life, does not communicate strength to us to fulfill its commandments; on the contrary, it kills us, condemns us to eternal death on account of our sins, and offers no means of escaping it. If we were without sin and transgression, we could live by the Law, "but," as Paul proceeds, "Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Scripture has concluded all under sin, *i. e.*, it declares all men to be sinners and everything in the world to be corrupted by sin, and for this reason salvation comes by the promise of Jesus Christ to them that believe. Christ has worked out our salvation, which we could not work out, being transgressors of the Law and therefore guilty of eternal damnation. And in Christ therefore the salvation which He wrought in our place is offered to all, and they are only asked to believe, to accept by faith what Christ has done for them. From this it is apparent, then, that the Law and the Gospel are not against each other. If we were able to fulfill the Law, we could live by it, and would need no Gospel, nor would the Gospel have been given in that case. But as we are sinners, unable to fulfill the Law and therefore unable to go to heaven by it, therefore the Gospel was given with its free promises of salvation.

Thus we have again occupied ourselves with this important subject, both the difference and the harmony of the Law and the Gospel. We have seen that the Law does not annul the Gospel nor conflict with it, but that there is a most beautiful harmony between them, that it is the purpose of the Law to prepare us for the Gospel and to bring us to Christ. May God bless also this contemplation of His holy Word within our hearts, so that we may learn to employ and apply both doctrines continually better. Amen. G. L.

Sermon on 2 Tim. 3, 15—17.

Whatever is not scriptural is not theological, and, we may add, cannot be Lutheran. For the true Lutheran church accepts, believes, and confesses no doctrine except it can in all its points be substantiated with clear texts from Holy Scriptures. In our doctrinal statements we neither go beyond, nor stop short of, the doctrinal state-

ments of the Bible. Whatever the Bible teaches we believe and confess; whatever it does not teach we repudiate and reject. We do not base our religious convictions on the conclusions of human reason or on the authority of man, but solely on the Word of God. Luther and the other church fathers are to us not the source of our religious knowledge, but merely witnesses showing that they understood the teachings of Scriptures as we now understand them. We do not believe in Luther, but we seek to cultivate that truly Lutheran spirit not to bow to any authority but the Word of God, and to submit readily to this authority in every instance. The Bible, therefore, means much to us, in fact, it means everything; it is the only source of all our religious knowledge, the foundation of our beliefs.

This position of our church is much assailed in our day. The devil knows full well how important the Bible is to Christians, hence he violently attacks and seeks to destroy it. Beguiling the minds of some who seemed to be leaders in the church, he pressed into their hands the dissecting knife of "higher criticism." And alas, what havoc have they wrought! Unscrupulously they used this profane knife on the body of the sacred text, eliminating, as they said, human mistakes and interpolations, until we hardly know what of the Bible is God's Word and what not. Others would make us believe that the Scriptures are not sufficient for all practical purposes, especially not for the saving of our souls, hence they recommend to us the "traditions of the church" or their own "new revelations" and their "keys to the Scriptures." And if in this way Satan does not succeed in luring us from our place of safety, he sends false teachers who, pretending to stand squarely on the Bible, still make a wrong use of it. Following their own reason they either knowingly or unknowingly teach things contrary to the Word. Thus in various ways the devil seeks to tear up the very foundation on which our faith is built. Therefore we must again and again fortify ourselves in our position over against these attacks by reminding ourselves of what the Scriptures say about themselves.

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT THEMSELVES?

1. *About their essence;* 2. *Their purpose;* 3. *Their use.*

1.

What do the Scriptures say about their *essence*? We read in our text: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The word Scripture in this passage refers to the Old Testament, because at the time when Paul wrote his epistle to Timothy the New Testament canon was not yet completed. Whenever, therefore, Christ or the apostles spoke of the "Scriptures," they meant the sacred writings of the Old Testament. However, what Paul in our text predicates of

the Old Testament holds good also of the writings of the New Testament, for in another place, 1 Cor. 2, 13, he says of himself and his fellow apostles: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." From this it is clear that also the New Testament Scriptures are given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost!

But what does it mean that the Scriptures are given "by inspiration of God"? It means, they were inspired, or breathed into the holy writers by God. Let me illustrate. When on the day of Pentecost the disciples were all with one accord in one place, there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty, rushing wind, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Here we are told that the disciples spoke; they preached the "wonderful works of God." And not only did they speak "with other tongues," but they spoke "as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Holy Spirit filled their hearts and souls, and it was He that moved them to speak, yea, who also put the very words they uttered, their utterances, into their mouths. These disciples spoke by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Thus it was with the writers of the various books of the Bible, the prophets in the Old, and the apostles and evangelists in the New Testament. Also these "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Whenever God wanted another part of His revelation to be recorded, He would select His man and by His Holy Spirit move him to write; and while the prophet wrote what he had heard and seen, or what God had revealed to him in a vision or a dream, the Holy Ghost would so influence, guide, and govern him, that he wrote "as he was moved," and that each word and sentence he wrote was an "utterance" of the Holy Ghost. For we must not imagine that while God made known to these men His thoughts, He left it to them to express these divine thoughts in their own words, but we must firmly maintain the "verbal inspiration" of the Scriptures. While each of the writers retains his peculiar vocabulary and style of diction, the very words they used were given them, as Paul clearly says: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." From this we see, not only the thoughts and doctrines of the Scriptures, but also the very words that express these thoughts and doctrines, are given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

We must take a firm stand in this, that *all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God. For there is in our day a movement on foot to set aside this doctrine of verbal inspiration. Men will get up in the pulpit and criticise the Bible, saying that some parts of the Bible are, indeed, the inspired Word of God, while others are but

the word of man; that the Bible *contains* the *thoughts* of God, but *is not* the *word* of God; that besides divine truths it contains also the words, views, and teachings of men. Now if this were the case, the Bible would not be worth anything to us, for then nobody could know what of the Bible is the Word of God and what is the word of man, hence we should always be in doubt as to what of the Bible we are to believe and what not. But let not this "higher criticism" disturb us in our faith that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and that therefore the whole Bible, and not merely parts of it, is the Word of God.

But if the Scriptures are the Word of God, they must be infallibly *true*, as it is impossible that God should lie or err. Hence it is written: "The word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth;" and the Savior says: "Thy Word is truth," and in another place: "The Scripture cannot be broken." Even those statements of Scripture which do not directly pertain to our salvation we must accept as divine truths. In our day many take exception to this. Yes, in matters relating to our spiritual welfare, they say, the Scriptures are an infallible guide, but whenever the Bible touches upon other things, such as the creation of the world, the solar system, historic references, we are not expected to believe that also in these points the statements of Scripture are true, but here we must correct the Bible according to the findings of modern science. But beware! Let us not be caught with this trick of the devil, who would first make one part of the Scripture uncertain to us, so that finally he might take away the whole. As we know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, so we maintain that all Scripture is the true and infallible Word of our God.

Let us ponder and grasp the full meaning of this thought: The Bible is the Word of God; not man, but God speaks to us in the Scriptures. Ought we not listen? Dare we ignore it? Wretched mortal, wilt thou turn a deaf ear to thy God when He speaks to thee? Ah, let us always bear in mind, the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, therefore let us "tremble at this word" and gladly hear and learn it.

2.

But as we hear and learn the Bible, we naturally inquire into its *purpose*. The purpose of the Bible is brought out in the following words of our text: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." When God had His book written, He had a clearly defined purpose in view: He wanted to make men "wise unto salvation." Though the statements of Scripture on the creation of the world and the origin of man and other points of natural science and of history are absolutely true over

against the ever-changing theories of modern scientists, the Bible does not purport to be a textbook of natural science and history. Yea, not even this is its chief purpose, to show us how to lead a moral, virtuous life. It is true, the Bible does teach this, but this is not its primary purpose. Its distinct and clearly expressed object is "to make us wise unto salvation," to tell us poor, strayed, lost sinners how we can be saved. We do not know this by nature. Our conscience proves us guilty before God; we know that our sins separate us from Him; but how to be saved from sin, how to be truly reconciled to God, how to obtain eternal life, we do not know of ourselves. This we can learn from Scriptures only. Many other books have been written, even books on religion, pretending to lead man unto God; but this wisdom of saving our souls can be learned from none but the Bible, and whichever other book does teach this wisdom copied it from the Bible.

And how do the Scriptures make us wise unto salvation? "Through faith which is in Christ Jesus," Paul answers in our text. There is in man a natural knowledge of the Law, and hence also a natural knowledge of his sin and guilt. The revealed Law of God in the Scripture deepens this conviction in our hearts, and shows that of ourselves we cannot escape the wrath and punishment of God. But having thus realized our utter wretchedness and helplessness, we learn from the Gospel that Christ, the Son of God, came into this world to seek and save lost sinners, that He lived for us by fulfilling in our stead the Law we had not kept; that He suffered and died for us, paying the penalty of our guilt; that by His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death He redeemed us lost and condemned creatures, purchased and won us from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; that in Him God is reconciled unto us all, no longer imputing our trespasses unto us, but freely forgiving them for Christ's sake. Thus the Scriptures hold up Christ unto us as our only Mediator, Savior, and Redeemer, in whom we find grace, forgiveness, life, and salvation. Moreover, the Scriptures work in our hearts the acceptance of this Christ; they are truly a power of God unto salvation inasmuch as thereby the Holy Spirit enlightens our dark understanding with the knowledge of Christ, working faith in us by which we appropriate to ourselves all the merits of Christ's redemption. Whoever, therefore, accepts Christ as his personal Savior, whoever knows and firmly believes that the blood of the Son of God cleanses him from all sin, such a one has been made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

But are the Scriptures really *sufficient* for this purpose? Do we not need, besides the Bible, all manner of church traditions and new revelations? There are those that think so. They seem to doubt the

adequacy or sufficiency of the Scriptures. But from our text we learn that the Scriptures are "able," competent, sufficient to make us wise unto salvation. If, therefore, we have the Bible, we have all we need to learn that saving wisdom. Let us, therefore, not be led astray by false prophets that come to us, pretending to bring some new revelation and addition to the Word of God. Let us not even listen to them, but rather take our Bible, study it diligently, and it will not fail to make us, too, wise unto salvation. And you, my dear hearer, who are yet straying in the ways of sin and ignorance, not knowing where to find the way that leads to God, still ignorant of the wisdom that can save your soul, O, come hither, search the Scriptures! In them you shall find eternal life; for they testify of Christ.

3.

This leads us to the last point: How should we *use* the Scriptures? We read in the text: "All Scripture . . . is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The very fact that God revealed His Word to man shows that it is certainly the will of God that man should use this Word. While it is perfectly proper to print, sell, and buy Bibles, it is not proper that, having bought a copy of the sacred volume, you should use it merely as a piece of ornament on the center-table of your parlor, or if it be an illustrated copy, to use it only as a picture book to entertain the children. No, Christ says: "Search the Scriptures;" and it is sinful negligence not to do so.

But how are we to use the Scriptures? Read them merely from curiosity? or to pass time away? or for the sake of the language we may learn from them? Verily, such is not the right way of using the Bible. Paul tells us in the text that Scripture is profitable for "*doctrine.*" Hence we should study the Bible with a view of learning its teachings. To be wise unto salvation it is absolutely necessary to know certain doctrines, for instance, the doctrine of our utter sinfulness and inability to help ourselves, the doctrines of the love and grace of God, of our redemption in Christ, of a sinner's justification through faith, and many other things we must learn. Hence this is the first and chief use we should make of Scriptures, the use on which every other use depends, that we use it for doctrine.

The Scriptures are also profitable for "*reproof.*" Wherever by the preaching of the Gospel the good seed of God's truth is sown, the devil gets busy sowing the tares of error. There have always been men who for various reasons, by their craft and cunning, sought to pervert the truth and lead Christians into misbelief. And especially in our day the world is full of all manner of errors and heresies. Such false doctrines cannot be overcome with fire and sword and

force of arms, but only with the Word of God. Whenever, therefore, we read our Bibles, we should read them with a view of becoming able to reprove these errors, and with sound doctrine to convince the gainsayers.

Scripture is profitable, furthermore, for "*correction*," for correction of our yet sinful lives. By faith in Christ we Christians have a perfect forgiveness of all our sins, but our lives are not yet perfect. By reason of the weakness of our flesh we often stumble and fall into sin; sometimes we allow a certain sin to grow on us. And here Scripture comes in for our correction; it shows us our sins, rebukes our indifference and carelessness, calls our attention to the many snares that lie in the way, and thus it is that it corrects our lives, wherever such a correction is needed. And it is for such correction that we should use the Bible, in order that by its warnings we may be kept out of the way of sin.

Scripture is profitable, too, for "*instruction in righteousness*," that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Being Christians, we want to live as Christians; being God's children, we desire to do what is most pleasing to Him. But of ourselves we do not know in every instance what is becoming a Christian and what is pleasing to our heavenly Father, hence we have need of instruction, of instruction in righteousness of life. And the Scriptures are profitable for this; they tell us which works are good and pleasing to God, and how we ought to live worthy of our heavenly calling. We should therefore study the Scriptures in order to learn how we, as the children of God, may day by day become more perfect in our lives and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

There is yet another use of Scriptures not mentioned here, but spoken of in Rom. 15, 4: "That we through patience and comfort of Scriptures might have hope." As we Christians pursue our earthly pilgrimage, we must endure much tribulation; especially if we make such use of the Bible as we have just now heard, the world will hate us. And within our own hearts we experience doubts, fears, and Satanic afflictions. But also here Scripture can help us; it is profitable for "*comfort*;" its promises of grace and forgiveness, of final glory and victory cheer our hearts, revive our drooping faith, strengthen our hope and courage, and increase our patience under the cross. Therefore we should make also this use of Scripture that we comfort ourselves with its promises in all our many troubles.

But you ask, Is it possible for an average Christian to make such use of the Bible? Is it not perhaps necessary that he be especially gifted and learned? There are those that would make you believe this, saying that the Scriptures are too hard and difficult to understand, and that therefore it is best for the common people not

at all to read the Bible, but leave this to the priests and to those that are specially enlightened. But what does our text say? It says that Timothy "from a child had known the Holy Scriptures." From this it follows that the Scriptures are *clear and lucid* enough even for a child to understand them. Though some texts may be dark, others are sufficiently clear to enable us to understand how to be saved. And if we continue to study and ponder the Scriptures, also these darker texts will in time become clear to us.

Therefore, my beloved hearers, let us not neglect our Bible! Let us read and study it again and again, for the Scriptures are a treasure which we can never exhaust; though we lived a hundred years, we should always find therein more interesting, instructive, comforting, saving truths. Heed, then, the Word of Christ, our Lord: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Amen. E. K.

Funeral Oration.

(See Walther, *Predigtentwuerfe*, p. 444 ff.)

Ungodly people, unconverted sinners dread death and all things tending to remind them of death. This truth should not in the least surprise us; for they must experience that death is the wages of sin. Seeking their portion only in this life, must they not be strongly affected when seeing that all this has come to an end? They have loved the world with its transient pleasures, and now they must forsake and forever abandon them. They have put their hearts' trust in things visible, riches, wealth, beauty, art, power, wisdom, and honor, having said to the lump of gold, "Thou art my consolation," — and all this they must now lose. They have not sought those things which are above, but set their affection on things on the earth, and now they are to pass away into an eternity to them wholly unknown. This thought frightens them and makes death to them so dreadful. They look beyond the grave upon the throne of the Most High, where He shall sit, passing judgment just and severe upon them also, and this must, of course, throw them into despair. They think of hell, and for that reason they shudder at the very thought of death.

It can, however, not be denied that Christians, too, are attacked at times by the fear of death, even true Christians that have lived by the faith of the Son of God, by patient continuance in well-doing have sought after eternal life and have exercised themselves to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. Whence comes their frequent dejectedness when they are to put off the tabernacle of their body? It is caused by the flesh and blood which also Christians have and against which they must battle. Moreover, even true Christians often forget that for them the glory of eternal life lies concealed behind the fears of death, grave, and decay. But also in this respect there always is a vast difference be-

tween the wicked and the pious, the converted and the unconverted, the pardoned and the unpardoned. This fear befalls the pious only in hours of temptation, and they conquer it by virtue of the strength their faith gives them, while the ungodly tremble in the throes of death, finding neither counsel nor comfort.

True Christians do not mourn because they must in death forever renounce the pleasures of this world; they are not afraid because they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. They know, whatever they lose are not true but only seeming treasures in which they did not trust nor seek true happiness. Death, as transition into another life, is to them death no more, but a redemption, a deliverance. For the sting of death, we know, is sin, but the Christians can give thanks to God that He has given them the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason they can exclaim joyfully: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Death, therefore, is to a Christian not a dreadful thing, properly speaking, but something desirable, being to him the deliverance from all evil.

But does death really deliver from all evil—death, which is called the wages of sin? Yes, indeed, to a Christian death is a redemption, a deliverance.

Being assembled here to-day for the purpose of laying to rest one that has been a faithful member of our congregation, let us first consider a word of Holy Scripture which we find recorded in the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, reading in the 7th chapter, in the 24th verse as follows: "O wretched man . . . this death?"

St. Paul here indeed expresses a sad thought, a thought, however, that frequently rises in the heart of true Christians as long as they remain in "the body of this death," that is, in this mortal body. "O wretched man!" a Christian exclaims, who, yes, who shall deliver me from it? For, oh, there are so many things gnawing at his soul in this life that he, indeed, must consider death the most glorious deliverance from all these evils—for such a boon death is to him. Let us dwell on this subject awhile, considering with the aid of God's Holy Spirit:

THAT DEATH TO A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS A DELIVERANCE FROM ALL EVIL:

1. *A deliverance from the evils of the body;*
2. *A deliverance from the evils of the soul.*

1.

God is a God of love. When He created us, it was His earnest desire that we should be happy and blessed already in this life. Sin, however, crept in, destroying the glorious edifice of God, and together with sin misery entered this world, which exercises dominion with a heavy hand to the present day. The very first thing a newborn infant does is to whimper and to cry, and how many, scarcely awakened to this life, pass out of this world again after a brief or, probably, protracted illness. Quite a number, it is true, attain the beautiful period of youth, but it, too, flows by with the swiftness of a stream. And on what does youth stake its happiness? From what does it ex-

pect the gratification of its desires? Is it not the future? Many a young man argues this way: Now, of course, you must labor and strain every nerve to gain a good start in life and provide for the future, but shortly things will change for the better. After having secured a house and home, you will be able to live quietly, and then you will cheerfully and gladly serve your God. But does he find what he has been longing for, rest and peace undisturbed? No, his hopes have been in vain.

If, however, a person fears God with sincerity of heart, faithfully walks in His ways, and no longer wishes to be conformed to this world, does not the entire wicked world become his enemy, trying to grieve him and to disturb his peace, to deprive him of his good name, and, if it were in its power, to fell and overpower him? Is not the entire world in truth one vast hospital, a vast charnel house, a vast cemetery? Where on all the earth is there a spot where joy and happiness reign supreme? Where will you find a country, a city, a hamlet that has no unhappy people, where people do not often cry for help in vain, or yearn in the long nights for the light of the day, and, when day has come, again in vain long for the repose of the night? Where is there a family not visited by pain and sickness? Where is the father that could not speak of such things? Where are the parents whom none of their children ever caused to sigh? How many see a son or a daughter grow up with the fond expectation of finding them their stay and support in hoary age, but soon they are parted from them as was Job, God taking them away, and now they stand alone. Sorrowfully they humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. On the other hand, how many children whose life is spared to their parents enter on the paths of sin, thereby causing their parents twofold sorrow and far more gnawing cares.

And after all this has been overcome, after days of ever-recurring want and care for the necessities of this life, at last old age approaches with its army of burdens. Strength failing him, his hands trembling, his head bending low, heavy with the burden of old age bearing down on him, and glancing back upon life spent, the Christian sees that "the days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow." And finally—the grave, the last hour! Now, what is this hour to the true Christian? The hour of deliverance, in the first place, of all these bodily evils. If we are Christians, death is to us a messenger of peace sent by God, a herald from heaven, the end of all trouble, eternal deliverance from all dangers, for now God will wipe away all tears from the eyes, death itself will be no more, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

2.

But, my friends, the bodily evils are not the only ones which a Christian must endure here on earth, neither are they to him the most vexing and depressing ones. Far greater are the evils besetting his soul. But death also makes an end to these spiritual evils.

The ungodly, of course, is concerned about his sins far less than about anything else in this world, as well as about the great danger

of losing his soul. Sin dominates him entirely; he considers sin lightly; moreover, he excuses, loves, and cherishes sin. He imagines nothing in this world to be nicer than to do the will of the flesh, to satisfy its desires, to carry into effect the sinful intentions, to love and serve himself, and to indulge himself in his envy and avarice. Quite different from this is a godfearing man. To him sin is the greatest evil, alarming him more than anything else, being his heaviest affliction, yoke, and burden, prompting him to join in the words of the psalmist: "All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning." His sins, however, have driven him to Christ, and by faith he has embraced Him as his Savior, and thus the power of sin has been broken within him. He prizes highly the love of the Redeemer, who shed His holy and precious blood in order to blot out man's sin. How, then, could he love sin, seeing that it nailed his Savior to the cross? How could he, by sinning willfully, offend Christ who was delivered into the jaws of death for his sake? No, such a thing he would not do.

But though the desire to commit sin is quenched and the power and dominion of sin is broken, he is painfully grieved to find that the innate poison of sin will not leave him entirely. Sinful thoughts, lusts, appetites continually rise within him, and the world is forever seeking to ensnare him and to drag him into perdition. He fights the good fight of faith, he sighs and prays, but not always is he able to conquer; though he does not fall into shame and vice, which would deprive him of God's grace, yet many a word or deed is defiled by sin. Now he is very loath to watch or pray; now he is tired of battling against sin; now he allows earthly troubles to weaken his faith, so that he no longer puts his firm trust in the divine help so graciously promised, nor in the faithfulness of God. Hours of severe trials harass his soul, and often he knows not if he will conquer, and save his soul, and thus attain to eternal happiness. He yearns for the hour when the Lord will receive him into His heavenly kingdom. He desires to depart and to be with Christ, praying: O Lord Jesus, do come! The day of his death is his wedding-day when he is forever espoused to Jesus.

Now, this text may well be applied to the deceased. He often had reason to sigh: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The Lord has heard his prayer and has delivered him from every evil of body and soul, has granted him a blessed end, and taken him from this vale of tears to His heavenly mansions. And now,

O may this bounteous God
Through all this life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

Amen.

H. D. WAGNER.
